

Sedona Library takes technology lead on portable audio books

By David W. Keeber | Sedona Public Library

Sedona, AZ - A few years back, there was a huge debate in the library profession about adding video tapes of films to our collections of books. Some felt that libraries were about only books, but others reminded the naysayers that we are supposed to respond to the needs of our users. They also made the case for libraries being providers of information in all forms. In the end, the video proponents won the day. Since then, libraries have expanded their collections to include videos, books on tape, books on CD, DVD's, and lately, downloadable books.

This last has been a bit slow to start. Many people see portable books such as books on tape or CD as something you listen to in your car, and if they don't plan on driving a long distance, they just don't check them out. During the holidays and in the summers, when everyone is traveling distances to vacation or to see family, we check out loads of them. It seems that people see this format as only to be heard in their cars, or occasionally, especially among Sedona's many artists, they listen to the in their studios while they work.

Everyone has seen the iPod come into wide popularity in the past few years. Many, many teens are perfectly happy to go about their activities with their earbuds in, happily listening to music. Podcasts, downloadable radio shows ranging from music to talk radio, are also starting to gain wider acceptance as more folks get portable music players onto which they load whatever the care to listen to.

Now, books in electronic format are no longer tethered to one's car stereo system or your home music player. The Sedona Public Library has a great new format for books called the Playaway. These are portable music players that come preloaded with a single book. They are about the size of a matchbook and can be used anywhere, anytime.

Now, you can work in your garden, take long walks, exercise, ride your bike, or do housework while listening to top notch personalities reading your favorite books. The player can be popped into a pocket, hung on a lanyard, tucked into a backpack and you can listen for hours to the latest bestsellers. You don't need to understand how to download things off of your computer because the books come pre-loaded on the players.

Each player requires a AAA battery to run it for hours. You also need the little earbuds to hear the sounds – no speakers on the players. For sanitary reasons, you will want to have your own earbuds, so the Library will sell you a pair for only \$1.00! Keep them safe and you can use them many times, over and over.

Sedona Public Library has invested a fair amount of money to start this project with an excellent collection of titles. There are fiction and nonfiction, bestsellers and standards, adult and children's books. If there are titles you would like to see us add to this collection, be sure to let us know. You can find these new items on the

rolling cart in the main lobby. Staff is ready to show you how these work – very easily, by the way – and you will quickly find that there is nothing to it. In no time at all, you'll be enjoying a great book, happily untethered from your home or auto stereo system.

Come in to the Sedona Public Library and check out a Playaway book. You'll enjoy them and pretty soon, you may even want you own portable music player, which would be good because at the turn of the year, the Library will begin to offer downloadable audio books that go onto your own player. But, more on that when that new service is offered! In the meantime, check out a Playaway!